



Second Screen Production

Creating rich media experiences through synchronous interplay between TV, web and social media

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Second Screen Production

- creating rich media experiences through synchronous interplay between TV, web and social media

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*** this paper is a work in progress and may not be quoted ***

Introduction

Second screen may refer to an additional media (e.g. tablet or smartphone) that allows a television audience to interact with the content they are consuming, such as TV shows. The two signifying features in this kind of cross-media production – the way we define it in this paper – are synchronicity and simultaneity: The user engage in watching live TV shows and live chats, Facebook-updates, tweeting and so on, thus she communicates both with the TV show as it airs and with other users.

Both producers (the live TV show embedded in its cross media production design) and the users (engaging in a variety of activity on the platforms at hand) are engaging in simultaneous acts of communication. Based on preliminary findings of an ongoing research project¹ (see web ref.) on the Danish production of the talent TV show format *Voice* (TV2 2012), this paper examines this *rich media experience* meaning an augmented television experience implying engagement modes with a potentially high degree of participation, collaboration and co-creation.

The rich media experience second screen productions produces builds on augmentation of a specific media (the television set) by implementing other media platforms and media services into the communication structure, creating a *realtime* interplay between these media, thus allowing different modes of user engagement: *communication as collaboration*; *communication as participation*; *communication as co-creation* and positioning the TV viewer in a role as both user and producer. The synchronicity and simultaneity inherent in user activities across

¹ The project "Cross-media communication and production: The interplay of realtime internet and live television in *Voice*" is a 1 year research project funded by the research section under the Ministry of Culture. Its participants and partners are Ditte Laursen (senior researcher, Danish State and University Library), Kjetil Sandvik (University of Copenhagen, head of the "Meaning Across Media" project), Niels Brügger (Aarhus University), software developers at the State and University Library/DigiHumLab.

media in second screen production have not yet been analyzed and conceptualized, which is the purpose of this paper (see fig. 1).

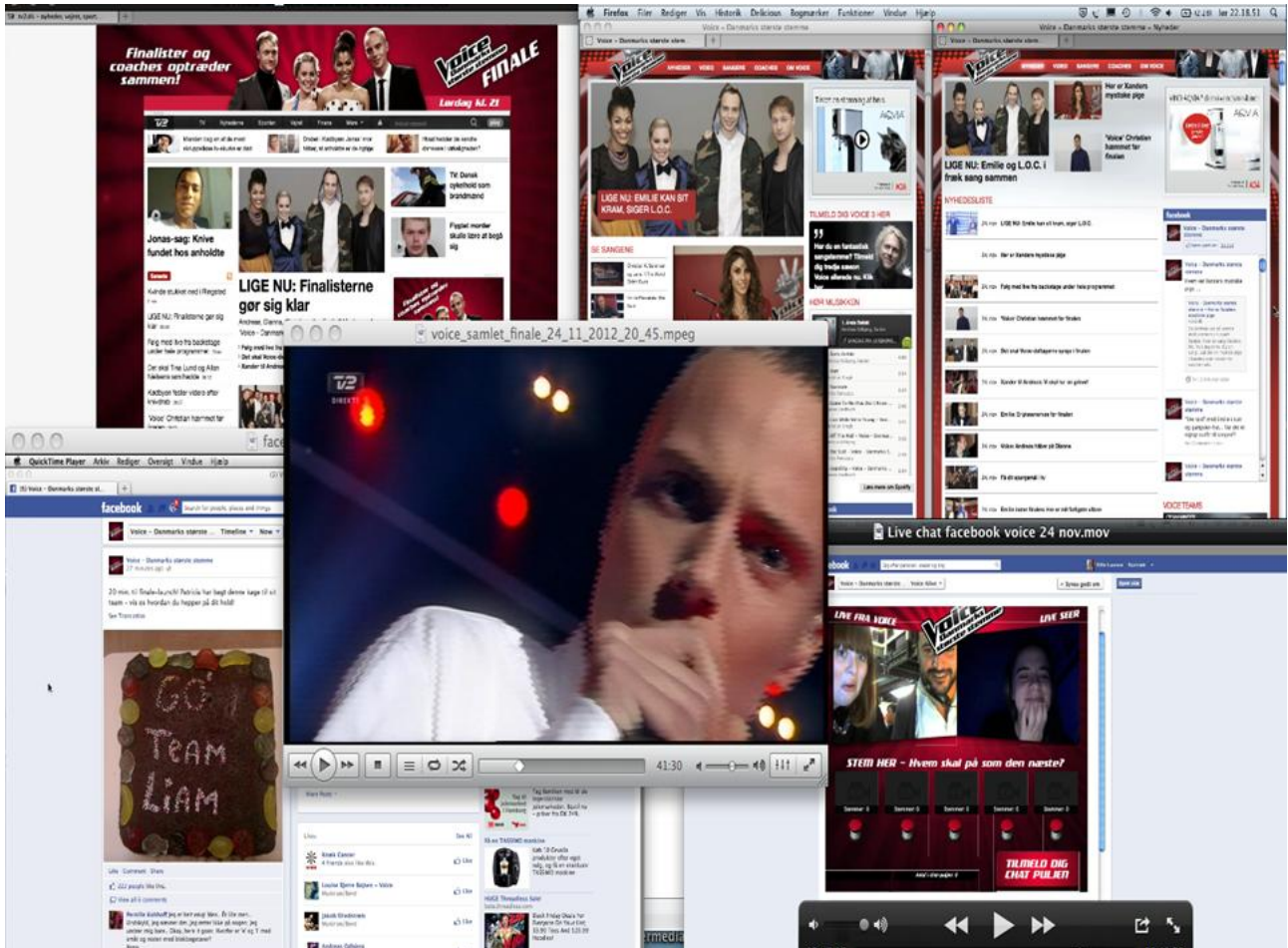


Fig. 1. Montage of screens and media synchronous and simultaneous at work in the cross media production of the 2012-season of *Voice* (TV2)

Uses across media

This paper finds inspiration in an ongoing research project “Meaning Across Media” at the University of Copenhagen (see web ref.) which aims at examining the juncture of ‘users’ and ‘producers’ and in doing so distinguishing analytically between different kinds of content *production* – from the millions of users who daily update their Facebook profiles and post on their walls, to those far fewer users who take part in user-driven content production, whether initiated by companies (e.g., developing dramatic content for the TV series *Bar Karma*) or by users themselves (e.g., creating home-made videos for YouTube, or using games like *World of Warcraft* for creating their own ‘machinima’ films).

The “Meaning Across Media” project further distinguishes different types of *distribution*. Specifically, the project relies on a theoretical typology of different modes of user engagement (Sandvik 2010, 2011), which further recognizes the cross-media nature of much contemporary communication (ONG 2009):

- *Communication as composition* (the recombination of media contents by established media (the book, the movie, the game, the website) and/or the combined use of various media and applications by audiences (using a media player to watch a TV program, using a browser to monitor its website, and using news applications to get updates)).
- *Communication as collaboration* (e.g., distributing (sharing, spreading) media content or participating in debates relating to media content (chats, blogs, forums)).
- *Communication as participation* (e.g., influencing the content of television, such as using text messaging (SMS) to vote for one’s favorite in a talent show).
- *Communication as content curation* (i.e. compiling and organising existing bits of material, rather than necessarily creating new content; prominent in sites from del.icio.us to Reddit, or in retweeting patterns around crisis events).
- *Communication as co-creation* (the independent creation of media content, e.g., designing new features on Facebook).

Individual media users increasingly use a wide variety of media types and genres in their everyday lives. We do this for diverse purposes of communication: pleasure, politics, planning and organizing, interpersonal relations, and so on. As media develop into rich and interlinked platforms (the computer, the mobile phone, the internet), we come to use this variety of media not just separately but in shifting combinations. In a next step, these patterns of communication transgress traditional consumer roles and may develop into more participatory modes. For instance, news may be consumed by reading newspapers (off-line/online), watching television news (bulletins or text-TV), subscribing to online news services, and so on. But news may also be appropriated in a more participatory mode: commenting on news stories, participating in forums debating news issues, sharing news stories on our social network sites (e.g., Facebook). Finally, users may engage in co-creative activities such as citizen journalism, documenting important events they happen to attend and making them available to others, whether the media or other groups as ‘audiences.’

Previous research has examined the production and uses of the contents of various media, but mostly in comparative isolation from each other. This paper examines the different modes of communication across media that users engage in as viewers, readers but also participants in online discussions, writers of blogs, comments, updates, tweets and so on in a cross media and second screen based production design and thus engaging in communication both as collaboration, participation and co-creation.

Audience and reception studies have traditionally asked not only what media do to users, but also what users do with media (Katz 1959): how do people use, interpret, and otherwise engage different types of media (for a recent comprehensive survey of this kind, see Pew Internet 2011). Some users may just employ one of the modes above, some all four of them. Whereas the concept of cross-media communication has most commonly been used to refer to media institutions and their communication strategies (Petersen & Rasmussen 2007), the focus of this paper – informed by the *Meaning Across Media* project – will be on the user perspective.

Recent research has begun to specify the nature of media use in the digital media environment (Benkler 2006; Bruns 2008). Bruns, for one, has coined the term *produsage* to capture the ongoing reconfiguration of use vis-à-vis production. As such, current work is specifying and clarifying early suggestions by, for instance, Toffler (1970, 1980), that *prosumers* – a more critical and particularly active consumer – were replacing traditional, passive consumers. However, as pointed out by Bruns, Toffler's ideas were firmly grounded in the mass media age, and his prosumer does not capture the kind of self-motivated creative participant and co-creator which may be observed in projects ranging from open source software through *Wikipedia* to *Second Life*. As Bruns has it, terms like production and consumption are no longer of much use even in labored constructions such as *commons-based peer-production* (Benkler 2006) or *p2p production* (Bauwens 2005), when it comes to projects such as *Wikipedia*. An important task in grasping the user perspective today is to consider the diverse modes of engagement and various degrees of participation and co-creation taking place – by individual users and through networks of users in which media content is being shared, distributed, commented upon, edited and added to.

At the same time, the modes and conditions of production are changing, first of all, for established media organizations. To media companies, the complexity of the media environment poses great challenges, both in creating media content and in facilitating various types of user participation. A highly practical question is how to put different media types to the most efficient use in an overall strategy of communication. While the classic media are by no means obsolete –

studies consistently show that, even in the ‘Web 2.0 age,’ they remain the central providers of content, for example, on television (DR 2012) – media do realize the need to rethink and reshape themselves within a new media environment in which users are acquiring new roles.

Cross media production creating rich and participation-based experiences

When the Danish TV drama series *Matador* was broadcasted for the first time in the late 1970ies it left the streets empty and came to influence Danish everyday culture both while the series aired and long after. The series’ characters and plot constituted a common point of reference, something of which the Danish people spoke at home, at work, in the bus etc. Even though the Danish broadcast corporation DR’s monopoly has been broken since then and even though present day media landscape consists of a vast number of TV channels and programs to choose from, it seems that popular TV series like *The Killing* (DR) and shows like *X factor* (DR) and *Voice* (TV2) aired on the Danish national broadcast channels still are able to engage a large portion of the population. But contrary to *Matador* which public exposure was limited to the episodes broadcasted once a week (and what was written about the series in the newspapers), the appeal structure of these new series and shows rests on a cross media strategy in which digital media displaying complex websites and social media services such as blogs, network sites, file sharing sites and so on play a crucial role in providing a rich media experience expanding and transgressing the TV series and shows and enabling the viewer to become a media user through ways of participation, collaboration and co-creation.

This cross media format invites the dedicated user to engage and immerse herself in the production and in communities with other users, engaging in features like background materials, bonus materials, quizzes, previews. We know this from various forms of media strategies concerning fan cultures within popular culture:

Media producers are consciously building into their texts opportunities for fan elaboration and collaboration -- codes to be deciphered, enigmas to be resolved, loose ends to be woven together, teasers and spoilers for upcoming developments. (Jenkins 2003: 291)

But this way of expanding and enriching the media experience by including a participation-oriented dimension is not just aimed at devoted fans but a strategy for engaging media audiences all over the

world and especially digital media technology contribute with new opportunities for the users to engage in media content and even to contribute with their own content. Popular TV shows like *X factor* and *Voice* are cross media program formats which engages users by providing an experience of being part of a media event which transgresses the actual TV show and which make use of a coordinated collaboration between different media by having each media perform a specific role according to their specific affordances (Cf. Beckmann 2007: 27).

The cross media production of *X factor* make use of (one of) the TV media's strengths which is emotional intensification. This intensification is accomplished by the use of a classic dramatic plot inherent the contest-format (there can only be one winner) and the use of classical dramatic agents e.g. in casting the judges in the role as 'good cop vs. bad cop'. And furthermore the emotional engagement factor is ensured by the use of personal and emotionally loaded stories and the use of emotionally manipulative editing producing 'magic moments' by ways of close-ups, cross-editing, and focus on tears, tears and more tears.

At the same time the strengths of the website is added to the rich media experience with its characteristic as an augmentary media with a surplus of background materials about participants, their reactions to the judges and so on which extends the possibility for engagement and interaction and introduces a possibility for participation (guest books, chats, blogs). And to this cross media structure is added the strength of social media connecting and spreading the experience through the users' own networks. Thus the full cross media production of *X factor* as well as *Voice* include streaming services (e.g. Spotify), apps for smart phones, Facebook profiles, Twitter profiles, Youtube channels, Pinterest galleries and so on.

As a rich media experience *X factor* transgresses its boundaries as a stand-alone TV show. It invites the viewer not just to a TV experience but to become a participant in a collective course of events. The viewer can get involved, participate and have influence on several levels. And different media play specific – and coordinated – roles according to their strengths in creating this cross media experience.

X factor

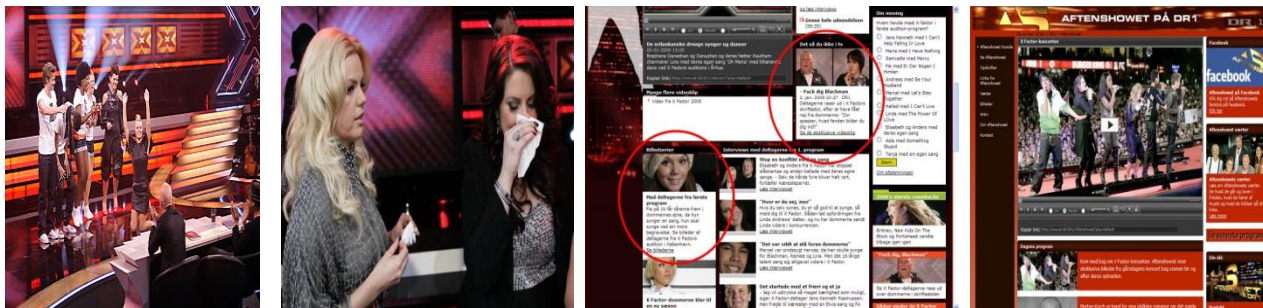


Fig. 2. From the left: finale shows (2009 season), the winner: focus on emotions, participants' reactions, live concert at Town Square (Copenhagen).

In his book *Television Culture* (1987), John Fiske analyzes the texts of television, which he divides into the primary text (the TV show), secondary texts (PR/marketing, background material, bonus material surrounding the primary text), and tertiary texts (the user's own texts which are produced on the background of the primary and secondary texts), and he analyzes how these texts constitute the intertextuality of a given TV show or series on a horizontal as well as a vertical level:

We can envisage these intertextual relations on two dimensions, the horizontal and the vertical. Horizontal relations are those between primary texts that are more or less explicitly linked, usually along the axes of genre, character, or content. Vertical intertextuality is that between a primary text, such as a television program or series, and other texts of a different type that refer explicitly to it. These may be secondary texts such as studio publicity, journalism features, or criticism, or tertiary texts produced by the viewers themselves in the form of letters to the press or, more importantly, gossip and conversation. (Fiske 1987, p.87)

What characterizes cross media productions (and their new media circuits) is that this hierarchy of primary, secondary and tertiary texts is changed. Cross media productions connect primary, secondary and tertiary texts into one common media text (Cf. Haastrup 2007), and by doing so they embed possibilities for user participation and several communication matrixes: a) one-to-many (the

TV show in itself), b) one-to-one (use of online chats, comment threads, tweets and so on), c) many-to-many (debate forums, quizzes, games etc.), and d) one-to-on-as-group (use of communities on e.g. Facebook). Thus the complex communicational structure in cross media productions offers a variety of possibilities for user engagement and by doing so they attempt to create a sense of belonging in the user based on identification and interaction. As such cross media productions create rich media experiences consisting of experiences through engagement and identification, participation, collaboration and co-creation. In full scale version we see experience universes consisting of interplay between different media such as novels, movies, games, websites as is the case with the *Harry Potter* universe now nicely framed by the *Pottermore* online world (pottermore.com) which includes new ways of experiencing the original Potter-stories by J.K. Rowling and their movie and game counterparts but also spin-offs by Rowling and a variety of user-created content such as fan fiction together with community services such as blogs and chats. But the way that rich media experiences provided by cross media productions usually are displayed is as a kind of *experience+*: an augmentation of one specific media by implementing other media in the communication-structure, e.g. a second screen combination of TV and web content on tablets and smart phones).

Voice: real-time interplay between uses of web and sociale media and live-shows in second screen television production

The possibility for user's dialogue with shows for radio and television is not a new thing. Call-in shows have existed for years, the interplay between mobile phones and text messaging and TV shows dates back to the early years of MTV, the ability to engage with TV shows also when it is not airing by engaging in activities on associated websites was developed to full a large extent with *Big Brother* concept and the possibility to monitor online the residents in the Big Brother house 24/7.

However, apart from the call-in program format, this interplay between TV show and user activities has always been somewhat asynchronous, thus rendering the dialogue not more than a quasi-conversation. But with new cross media productions such as *X factor* and *Voice* this has changed. The second screen logic of these productions imply that the shows are to be experienced simultaneously on two or more platforms (e.g. TV, tablet, smartphone) and through two or more services (e.g. live broadcast, website, social network site, microblogging). In the following we take a closer look at this *rich media experience* meaning the augmented television experience implying engagement modes with a potentially high degree of participation, collaboration and co-creation,

but at the same time we study the rich media experience inherent in the augmentation of web uses by the adding of (live) TV shows.

The synchronicity and simultaneity inherent in user activities across media in second screen production and how this enables real-time conversations between users and media have not yet been analyzed and conceptualized, which is the purpose of this article. By synchronicity we mean the characteristic of the second screen cross-mediatic setup in which acts of communication are taking place in parallel in realtime. In *Voice* – and we are here only dealing with the finale shows which are the only ones broadcasted live – this setup consist of 1) the broadcasted shows on TV2; 2) the show's dedicated website (v.tv2.dk) on TV2's web portal (tv2.dk), the latter also playing a part in the cross media communication; 4) the show's Facebook site; and 5) the live chat embedded in the Facebook site. Furthermore the setup includes Spotify which was used for streaming the various songs performed by the participants in the shows and it also includes the use of Twitter by judges, hosts and performers during the live shows². This setup enables the users to influence the live shows by using their mobile phones for voting for their favorite participant and by streaming their favorite song from Spotify – the number of votes and the streaming count determined which participant won the show. Furthermore the synchronicity of setup also allowed participant to see participant reactions covered by both the live show and the constantly updated website. And the users had also the opportunity to ask questions which would be posed to the participants by the show's hosts (see fig. 3).

² We have not collected data from the use of Twitter nor the streaming activity on Spotify, because this would have required a much more data collecting setup than we had at our disposal. On the challenges connected with collecting data on second screen cross media production, see our paper "Methods of collecting facebook data and their effects on later analyses".

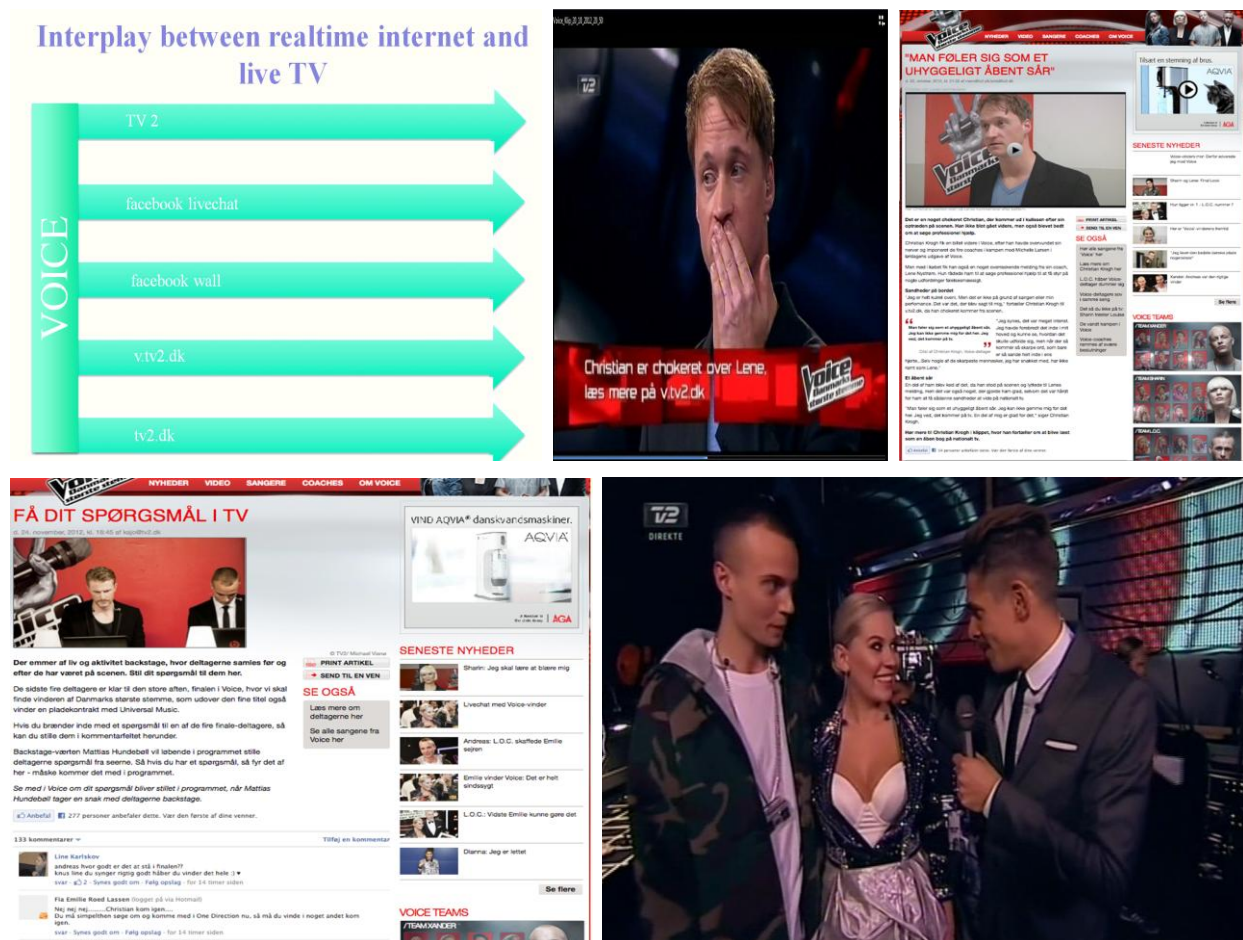


Fig. 3. 1) Model displaying the synchronicity between different media; 2) Participant reactions across media; 3) Posing live questions to the participants

While synchronicity refers to the second screen and cross media characteristics of the production, simultaneity is connected to the ways in which the communication between the production and its users takes place. While the communication across media in a production like *X factor* typically take place in sequences: background material is displayed and comments are made after the show has aired, the acts of communication in *Voice* happen at the same time, thus creating a sense of realtime conversation between the show, its participants and its audience – the users (see fig. 4)

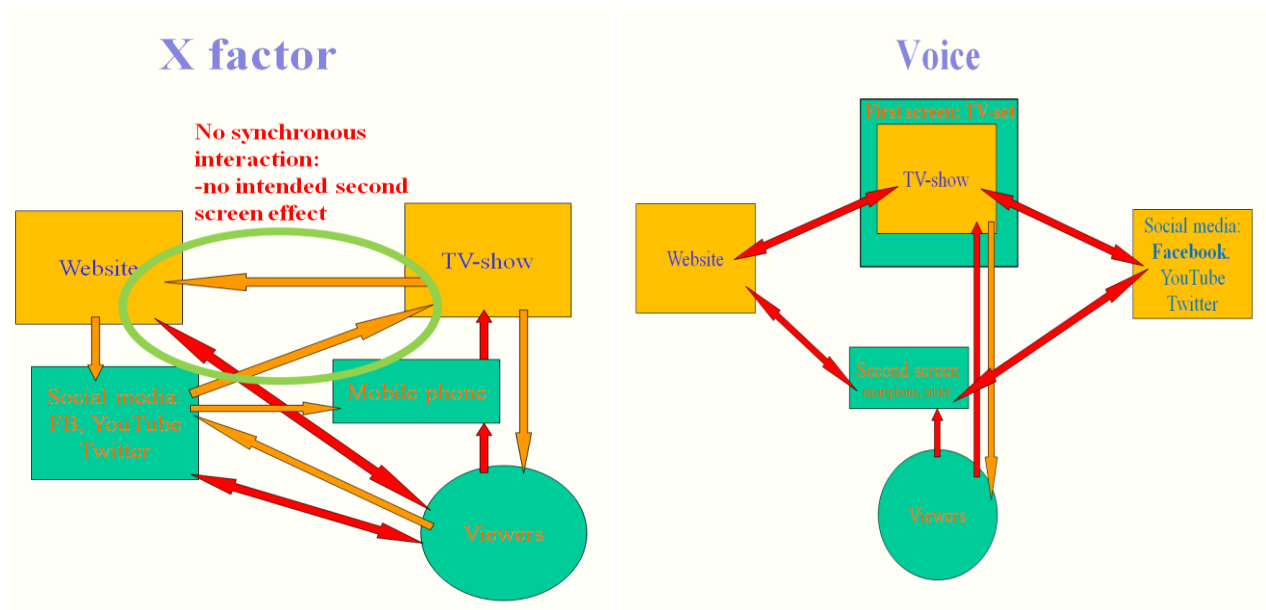


Fig. 4. Differences in communication structure between *X factor* and *Voice*

Potentially this simultaneity creates a sense of community and being-togetherness which resembles the characteristics of basic face-to-face communication. As such the simultaneous communication in *Voice* may be understood along the lines of Gregory Bateson's communication theory and its basic principles concerning our ability to communicate and to recognize that this is what we are doing. This ability to recognize communication as communication rests on an "existence of mutual awareness" and adjustment and adaptation towards what is being communicated and how it should be perceived. Bateson sums this up in the term *metacommunication*, which is "all exchanged cues and propositions about (a) codification and (b) relationship between the communicators" (Bateson, 1951: 209). The metacommunicational aspects of *Voice* as a second screen production are on the one hand embedded in the affordances of the different media at play: the possibility to post comments, to vote, to 'like' and so on define how the communication may take place and what the relationship between the ones (producers and users) communicating are. On the other hand the metacommunication is expressed through the instructions displayed on the various media like 'chat with the participants', 'cast your vote', 'get your question on the screen' and so on.

To map and analyze this conversational flow between parties present in the same mediated space-time continuum require simultaneous monitoring 1) the live TV show showing the competing participants on stage, the coaches watching and commenting, and the back stage area with the participants before and after their performance, 2) the communication on the website(s) with postings of who is winning and who is losing, comments from the participants and the

coaches, 3) the postings and ‘likes’ on the Facebook wall, and 4) the activity on the live-chat. What we find is an increasing activity as the show progresses, with growing numbers of ‘likes’ and comments as users’ favorites are either voted out or progressing towards the top. These comments are not just on the posting by the show’s producers and participants, but also on other user comments, thus creating a huge web of conversational threads displayed both on Facebook and on the website (see fig. 5).

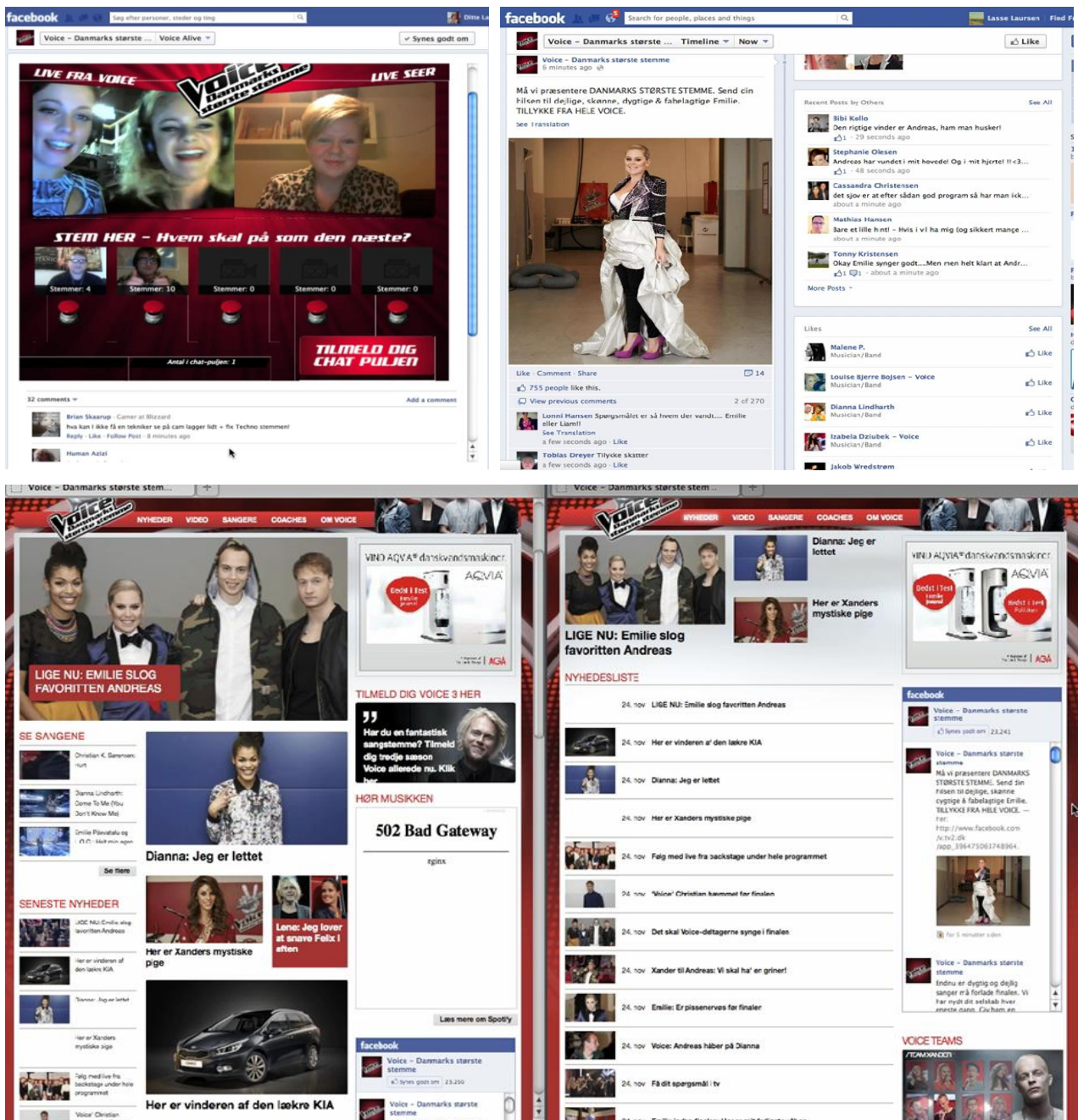


Fig. 5. Conversational activity across a) the live chat, b) the Facebook wall, and c) the websites

What remains to be done is categorizing the various communicational inputs being made in order to determine in what ways and to what degree the users engage in the second screen activity offered by the cross media production of *Voice* and how this is perceived as a rich media experience enabling communication as participation (voting, streaming), collaboration (live chatting, commenting on Facebook) and co-creation (posting questions to the program, creating discussions on the Facebook wall). What we can see from our data is that this specific type of augmented TV shows with its possibility for synchronous and simultaneous communication between production and users is that it creates a moment (the time-span of the live broadcast) of communal engagement across media between dedicated users which is quite unprecedented.

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